"TRANSIT CAMPS" IN SOUTH AFRICA

(Reports submitted by the International Defence and Aid Fund, London, to the Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa)

Unit on Apartheid
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NOTE

The Unit on Apartheid was established in the Secretariat of the United Nations, in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 2144 A (XXI) of 26 October 1966, "to deal exclusively with policies of apartheid, in consultation with the Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa, in order that maximum publicity may be given to the evils of these policies". Among the functions of the Unit is the preparation of special studies on apartheid.

This publication consists of two reports, the first on "transit camps" in South Africa and the second on one of these camps, "Welcome Valley", transmitted to the Special Committee by the International Defence and Aid Fund, in May and July 1967 respectively, and published as documents of the Special Committee (A/AC.115/L.200 and A/AC.115/L.209). They are published in this series at the request of the Special Committee, which considered that they deserved wider circulation.

The Reverend Canon L. John Collins, President of the International Defence and Aid Fund, wrote in his letter of transmittal that these camps, originally planned to house aged and infirm Africans, were being used "for a new and sinister purpose, namely, as places of deportation for people who have served sentences for political offences". The second report is written by Mr. Mahlubi Livingstone Mrwetyana who had been sent to the "Welcome Valley" on completion of a prison sentence for a political offence; he has since left South Africa. Both reports are reproduced as submitted.

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TRANSIT CAMPS

(A special report by the International Defence and Aid Fund, May 1967)

The International Defence and Aid Fund has obtained details of South African transit camps. The following are excerpts of letters written by Africans who have been transported from the urban areas to rural townships, after having served prison sentences for belonging to outlawed organizations:

> "After my release I fell victim to the Government's resettlement scheme, that is, I lost the right of staying in the urban area of..... The conditions here are very much depressing... we have been cut off from street lights, from proper streets, from cultural activities, from proper postal services... worse still is the scarcity of work... Most of the people here are out of work... I have an acute shortage of food and out of money... If perhaps you can get hold of old clothing I shall be greatly obliged if you could send me some..."

Another writes:

> "I am 23 years of age. I was working in a factory at.... where I was born, helping my poor parents in supporting my schooling brothers and sisters when I was arrested for being a member of a banned organisation. I was sentenced to 2 1/2 years imprisonment. On being released from prison I was endorsed out of my area to a place called.... in the.... district. To me this has become tantamount to a second term of prison..... There are no factories, no shops and no offices where one could find oneself a job here..."

A third says in his appeal:

> "I was born in.... where I grew up and worked all my life. I was arrested in 1964 and sentenced to 2 1/2 years imprisonment for being a member of a banned organisation. On my release I was informed that I had forfeited my residential rights and that I was to come and settle here... The conditions here have rendered it impossible for anyone to live a decent life without some assistance..."

We have omitted names and places because we wish to conceal the identity of the writers of these letters, to safeguard them from further persecution by the authorities.

We are able to say, however, that the letters were despatched from one of the twenty-four rural African settlements (or transit camps) established by the South African Government "to house families or individuals unable to obtain a livelihood

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in white areas, e.g., pensioners and families which cannot be accommodated in white areas but whose breadwinners can be employed in such areas".[1]

Behind these words lies one of the grim processes of apartheid enforcement - the removal of thousands of people from the industrialized urban areas to the backward tribal areas.

"TEMPORARY TRANSIT CAMPS"

In March 1965 the South African Institute of Race Relations collected information regarding the first transit camp to be established at Mount Coke in the Ciskei. The Institute reported that Mount Coke and other camps had been set up as a result of pressure from magistrates who were alarmed at the number of homeless elderly Africans appearing before the courts. Most of these old people had been ejected from white farms and then refused official permission to join their sons and daughters in the towns. In despair, they had squatted on commonages until removed by the police.

The Department of Bantu Administration and Development established Mount Coke as a temporary transit camp until a permanent settlement could be built. By March 1965 there were 250 persons in the camp, living in wooden huts. The number increased rapidly as the old people took in their grandchildren and in some cases their sons and daughters.

A few of the aged inhabitants were able to get the old age or other pensions (usually about 30/- a month) but most had no income and the Department had to waive rent and service charges. When the poverty of the people at Mount Coke became known, the Red Cross, the Black Sash and various charitable organizations collected clothing, blankets, furniture and other essentials for them. On its part, the Department issued pauper rations to those not in receipt of pensions, distributed oranges and supplied pro-nutro biscuits and skimmed milk to children under the age of sixteen.

Conditions at Mount Coke drew attention to the existence of other camps, particularly one at Shiloh (generally known as Sada) near Whittlesea in the Ciskei. On 19 May 1964 the Minister disclosed that there were nineteen such settlements

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1/ Statement by the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, House of Assembly Debates, 3 February 1967.

"where Africans endorsed out of urban areas or dismissed by farmers can go to live".[2] Replying to a question in Parliament on 9 August 1966, the Minister said the settlement at Shiloh was established in 1963 as a transit camp but was being converted into a township for the settlement of displaced persons and pensioners. He said the 560 families (482 men, 718 women and 1,485 children) were there "voluntarily" and were accommodated in prefabricated wooden, asbestos and wood and iron huts with latrines, for which a rent of 14/6d per month was charged to those who could afford it. The Minister said that the men at Shiloh were employed by the Bantu Trust on irrigation schemes and the development of the township itself.[3]

THE "TOWNSHIPS"

On 21 February 1967 the Minister laid on the Table in Parliament a full list of the twenty-four townships "similar to Shiloh", as follows:

Name of township and district	Males under 18 years of age	Females	Children
Shiloh, Whittlesea	224	1,268	2,004
Selosesha, Thaba Nchu	79	523	1,229
Witzieshoek, Harrismith		6	15
Boekenhoutfontein, Pretoria	200	2,780	6,126
Temba/Leboneng, Hammanskraal	200	1,200	3,800
De Hoop, Lichtenburg	270	840	1,722
Pampierstat, Taung	218	970	1,270
Magogong, Taung	120	534	292
Mpungamphlope, Babanango	8	156	261
Mountainview, Newcastle	194	583	2,074
Mondlo, Nqutu	135	1,640	2,400
Ncotshane, Piet Retief	58	216	864
Thulamahashe, Pilgrimsrest	32	227	916

2/ House of Assembly Debates, Cols. 6217-6218.

3/ House of Assembly Debates, Cols. 414-415.

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Name of township and district	Males under 18 years of age	Females	Children
London, Pilgrimsrest	15	107	194
Arthurseat, Pilgrimsrest	22	366	654
Elandsdoorn, Groblersdal	489	1,047	1,673
Setayeng, Pietersburg	67	136	312
Shayandima, Sibasa	8	17	83
Senwamakgope, Soekmekaar	8	108	278
Morathong, Tzaneen	27	313	1,100
Lorraine, Tzaneen	30	445	1,500
Moetladimo, Tzaneen	14	321	1,250
Ntuzuma, Inanda	401	444	1,329
Ilinge, Glen Grey	137	224	458
Totals:	2,956	14,471	31,804

Note: If the heading to column 1, "Males under 18 years of age" is correct as printed, the adult males in the twenty-four townships have not been accounted for.

THE CAMP DWELLERS

Who are the people "unable to obtain a livelihood in the white areas" (to use the words of the Minister)? As the three letters from which we have quoted above show, some are former political prisoners, men who have served their sentences and have been released from jail. Many others are, as the Minister says, "displaced persons"; they are Africans who are no longer wanted on the white farms, where they have grown old in the service of white masters, and aged Africans who are being ordered out of the urban areas. For some time the Government has been busy "endorsing out" elderly and infirm Africans, in pursuance of the policy that such persons should return to the "homelands" to live with relations or, if they have no relations in the tribal districts, to the rural townships or transit camps. The local Bantu Affairs Commissioner stated at Alexandra, Johannesburg, on 21 May 1966 that only in special circumstances were elderly Africans who were no longer able to fend for themselves, allowed to remain in urban townships. This

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conforms to the policy that Africans are tolerated in the white areas only as workers and when they are no longer able to work, they should go. As the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and Development said at Sharpeville on 2 April, "The Bantu should come to the white areas for no other reason than to convert their labour into cash."4/

As far as those who were born in the white areas are concerned, Dr. Verwoerd laid down official policy very clearly on 9 April 1957, when he told Parliament:

> "Our attitude is that when the Native is employed in the white area (i.e. urban area) - even if he has been here for one or two generations - then he is here in the service of the white man whose territory it is... They cannot have permanent rights in Johannesburg or Cape Town or in any other white city. They are there as long as they are employed there and as long as the white community continues to accept them there."

It is in accordance with this policy that aged and infirm Africans are being expelled from the urban areas and sent to the twenty-four rural townships listed above.

The third class of Africans deemed to be "unable to obtain a livelihood in the white areas" are the wives and children of men who are serving prison sentences for political offences. As part of the campaign of terror and intimidation against non-white opponents of the régime, the police and the Department of Bantu Administration and Development are making full use of the stringent provisions of the Natives Urban Areas Act to inflict further punishment on those who have engaged in politics and even their friends and relations. Many of those being endorsed out and sent to the rural townships (transit camps) are the dependants of jailed African politicians.

The fourth and largest category of camp dwellers in the twenty-four townships are men, women and children endorsed out of the urban areas because they have failed to meet the requirements of the Urban Areas Act or have fallen foul of its severe provisions. In terms of this law, Africans are allowed to live in an urban area only if they can prove they have resided there continuously since birth, or have worked there continuously for one employer for not less than ten years or have lived there continuously for not less than fifteen years, "... and has not during

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4/ Natal Witness 3/4.

either period or thereafter been sentenced to a fine exceeding one hundred Rand [5/] or to imprisonment for a period exceeding six months".

Any African who cannot establish the required proof can be removed, together with his dependants, to a rural village or settlement in a scheduled Native area indicated by the Secretary of Bantu Affairs. Others who can be endorsed out are "idle or undesirable" Africans. In 1964 these categories were extensively widened. The definition of "undesirable" was extended to include Africans convicted of a variety of political offences, including membership of or furthering the aims of the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress and other banned organizations.

It is interesting to note that the Government has ceased giving information relating to the number of Africans endorsed out. On 27 January 1967 the Minister said in Parliament that he could no longer give the figures "as statistics in this connection are not kept". Last year, however, he did give the figures for nine urban areas. These showed that 86,186 Africans had been endorsed out of the nine areas during 1965.

REMOVAL OF AFRICANS FROM THE WESTERN CAPE

Many of those now being sent to the resettlement areas are Africans from the Western Cape, who are being systematically removed in pursuance of the Government's plan to clear the area of Africans and make it the exclusive domain of whites and coloureds. The police continually raid the African townships and railway stations to round up those without documentary proof of their right to remain in the area. Thousands of Africans who previously met the requirements of the law were suddenly put in jeopardy on 4 August 1965 when a Cape Town Judge ruled that any African who did not register his or her claim to residence in an urban area within seventy-two hours of 24 June 1952, automatically failed to qualify for domicile there.

Until this judgement, such obligation to register had not been advertised and Africans were totally unaware of it. Following upon the court ruling, large numbers of Africans, mostly women, have been endorsed out of Cape Town and other Western Province towns. Complaining of the situation, Mrs. Helen Suzman said in Parliament on 8 February 1967:

5/ A rand is equivalent to $US1.40 or 10 shillings.

"..... This is a scandalous situation..... African women in Cape Town particularly are going through absolute purgatory at the moment because an effort is being made to ferret out every possible woman who can be removed from Cape Town; and where are they sent? They are sent back to the Reserves to relatives who in some cases have not seen them for 10, 15 or 20 years, who themselves are struggling to make ends meet, who have not enough to keep their own families going, or they are sent to a wretched transit camp like SADA, which is a disgrace to a civilized country (interjections). It is a transit camp."

The Minister intervened to deny that Sada (Shilon) is a transit camp but as Mrs. Suzman pointed out:

"Yes, I am describing it as a transit camp; if it is intended that those people should live there forever, then it is even more disgraceful... I have seen photographs of this place and it is a disgrace..."

VOLUNTARY OR FORCED?

It is difficult to understand what the Minister means when he says that the inhabitants of the rural townships (or transit camps) are there voluntarily. The former political prisoners, whose letters we quote, certainly did not volunteer to go there. Nor, we believe, did many others. In any case, it is a misrepresentation to use the word "voluntarily" when referring to the unfortunate victims of apartheid - the old, the infirm and the discarded - who are left with no alternative but to accept the meanest of shelter in their dire necessity.

Regarding the able-bodied African men and women who are sent to the transit camps, it is a well known fact that many are taken there under escort, often armed escort.

"PRISON LIFE BETTER"

The twenty-four rural townships (or transit camps) stand as the grim prospect for thousands of unfortunate people, who live in the shadow of the Government's ceaseless drive to remove unwanted Africans from the urban areas. The camps are being steadily enlarged to accommodate the constant influx of discarded old men and women, the dependants of political prisoners, the discharged political offenders, and the thousands of others endorsed out of the towns.

The Minister has claimed that the African men in these camps are employed "on irrigation schemes and the development of townships" on the sites. Apart

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from the obvious limitations of this employment, there is the complaint of the former political prisoners that there is no work for them and that "most of the people here are out of work". They say, "there are no factories, no shops and no offices where one can find oneself a job".

One applicant for help writes despairingly, "In many respects I find prison life better than life in this place."

INVESTIGATION NEEDED

Because apartheid laws and regulations prevent the free movement of people, the twenty-four rural townships (which the Minister says are not transit camps) are out of bounds to whites and not open to inspection. It is, therefore, difficult to get the full facts regarding these resettlement areas. The Government reveals as little as possible. The people accommodated there are unable or afraid to complain publicly. The Press is excluded from the areas and is thus prevented from making an independent inquiry into general conditions in the settlements and from questioning the residents, to test the accuracy of the Minister's claim that they are there voluntarily.

Many pertinent questions arise. For example,

(a) Which of the twenty-four townships are permanent and which are temporary?

(b) Are there any clinics, health centres, creches or hospitals in any of the townships?

(c) Are any of the inhabitants of these townships free to leave at any time?

(d) How many adult males are there in the townships and how many of them are employed?

(e) What provision is made for the maintenance of the aged and the infirm?

In the interests of humanity the South African Government should be called upon to disclose complete information regarding these transit camps (or whatever they wish to call them) and to allow independent investigators to visit the places to discover the facts.

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"WELCOME VALLEY"

by

Mahlubi Livingstone Mrwetyana

(A supplementary document, dated July 1967, to the special report on transit camps in South Africa)

A general picture

"Welcome Valley" or Ilinge Township could be one of the finest valleys I have ever seen in South Africa, were it not for the fact that through years of concentrating large stocks of animals on the area, the soil is now bare and unattractive to the eye. It is bounded on all sides by great bare red hills. The national road and railway line from Queenstown to Qamata and East London run in a westerly direction just behind the northern barrier of these hills. To the east across the hills lies Queenstown - nine miles away. In a south-easterly direction thirty-seven miles away lies Lady Frere, the administrative centre of the Glen Grey District of which Welcome Valley is a part. Across the stream that separates the mushrooming "location" from the rural areas of Machibini vast stretches, punctuated at intervals only by irregular patches of cultivated land, lie bare under the scorching sun. Large numbers of lean miserable-looking red blanketed African women can be seen on the fields patiently scratching the soil for a living. The whole of the area is a real valley of desolation at the moment.

Welcome Valley is ostensibly a place for the resettlement of displaced people in the Republic. In reality it is a dumping ground for the old age pensioners, who had before removal, been legally occupying municipal houses in urban areas for all their span of active life. Being old, they are now looked upon by White South Africa as a liability to the young growing economy of the towns and cities of South Africa. Welcome Valley is perhaps their last hell on earth before the grave.

There is a second group consisting mainly of young people who for one obscure reason or another have been declared "undesirable elements" in urban areas. A fair number of this group are between the ages of 13 and 20 years. They now loiter around the place. There are already rumours of attacks on elderly people

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or on property by groups of young boys at night - a natural result of concentrating a large number of diverse elements in a place that offers them no decent occupation. The young people are very bitter about their plight. They believe they have a case against whoever is responsible for their removal from urban areas. They have hitherto been enjoying opportunities of a more active, more familiar life in towns. They have been ruthlessly uprooted from all this and left to languish at Welcome Valley. Young people of school-going age are left with no opportunity of going to school, and this is done at a time when there is a great demand for educated young people in every community in the world. The old age pensioners seem to have adopted a what-can-we-do attitude. I remember a conversation I had with one old man who was in the group of people - old and young, fathers, children, mothers and all - which came from the Uitenhage area. In the course of our talk I learnt that before removal they were promised that they would be moved to the Kingwilliamstown area where their children could go to school and work at the Zwelitsha cotton mills. They left in two big railways buses with all their movable property in big trailers. They were about twenty families. After a day's journey the buses stopped at Welcome Valley. They were required to disembark. Before doing so they wanted to know how far the buses had still to travel to Kingwilliamstown. To their amazement they were informed that they had passed through Kingwilliamstown hours ago, and that this was where the Government was resettling them. Angry screams and shouts followed and the people refused to get down. The officials in charge had to phone Lady Frere for instructions. We were watching these developments from afar with interest. The buses stood there for hours, and still the people refused to disembark.

Threats that the police would be called were made, and eventually the occupants began to file out of the buses. Reluctantly and solemnly they started preparing themselves for the new homes - "the sweet homelands" of the present Government. I asked the same old man why couldn't they stay put in the buses and wait for the arrival of the police to whom they could have put their case. The reply was that most of them were old and infirm and were consequently, I quote, "afraid of being arrested for preaching Communism".

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I should also mention in passing these aspects:

(1) The two main groups seem to be drawn mostly from the Cape Province, that is, in: Uitenhage, Cradock, Somerset East, Somerset West, Cape Town, Priesks, Cathcart, Queenstown and Burghersdorp.

( ) Medical attention

There are no clinics or health centres. People have to go to Queenstown or Lady Frere for medical attention. Taxi charges to Queenstown vary from 5/- return (during the day) to £1. 7s. 6d. single (at night).

(3) Transport

Transport was very poor and expensive. There is now one bus-service to Queenstown (leaving Welcome Valley at 8 a.m. and returning at 4.30 p.m.)

The current bus fare is 27 1/2c. (2s.9d.) each way.

Because of poor transport facilities people who are banned and cannot leave the area find themselves in difficult situations sometimes. One time I had gone to see the chief magistrate at Lady Frere in connexion with my application for an exit permit. He was on the bench for the great part of the day, and by the time I saw him it was already late. I could not get the bus connexion at Nonesi bus station (where buses from Lady Frere to Queenstown meet the only bus from Queenstown to Welcome Valley). I had to go to Queenstown for a taxi. Being a banned and restricted person, entering the Queenstown area without written permission was a crime. I could have been arrested anytime whilst there. However, I calculated that even if I was arrested I would at the most get three months inside, and that in any case a prison term would be just one of those things. Fortunately a friend in Queenstown took me home safely.

(4) Housing

One-roomed corrugated iron or wooden shacks, with no ceiling or a proper floor. People, young and old, are just dumped and told to do the finishing touches themselves. The shacks are leaking and the mud floor is always damp. I remember the case of two very old and infirm women - sisters - who were all by themselves in their shack. During the rainy period early this year (January-April) their shack

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was in bad shape. The floor was very damp. They had to collect all their scanty belongings and put them in the centre of the shack - the only spot that was not badly affected. They used the same spot for sleeping at night. They had no beds, since they had left the furniture behind on the understanding that these would be sent to them immediately by rail. Generally families have to wait for weeks before the Government sends their property to them.

One time a group of elderly women braved it out and went to see the man in charge of the "location" to put their complaints about:

(a) housing condition;

(b) pension grants;[1/]

(c) the delay by the S.A. Railways in delivering their possessions.

Up to the time of departure the authorities had only attended to one of their main complaints - transference of pensions to Lady Frere.

I had my own experience with the man in charge - Mr. Duvanage. I went to see him about a request I wanted to make viz: that each shack should have its own lavatory (at the moment there is a communal lavatory system). His reply to this was that the materials for building lavatories had been ordered, and until they arrived "everybody will have to use communal lavatories" - to use his very words. He added that in any case most of us were used to "relieving yourselves in the bush" to quote his words again. I reminded him that as a member of the public I did not expect to be spoken to in that manner by an official - a civil servant - and I expressed the hope that his higher ups did not share this low opinion of Africans.

As mentioned above there are absolutely no comparatively decent jobs available at Welcome Valley. The main occupations are roads/dam construction and repairing and building more at £8.5s. a month. I should add that competition for available vacancies is very stiff because of the large number of "endorsed outs" from Cape Town whose homes are in the neighbouring rural areas.

Ex-political prisoners

Political prisoners who are about to be discharged after completion of sentence are usually transferred to prisons near the reserves viz: Lady Frere and

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1/ Their pension grants were long overdue, and they had not been given any reason for the delay in transferring their grants to Lady Frere.

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Cofimvaba in the case of Xhosa speaking prisoners and in the case of other "ethnic groups" to appropriate prisons near their respective "homelands". Ex-political prisoners constitute the third group of residents at Welcome Valley. The majority are banned and restricted to the area. The following is an attempt to simplify a rather involved problem on my part i.e., an attempt at giving all the relevant data on each of the ex-politicals there. With some of them I do not give their first names. This is unavoidable; my memory does not serve me well at the moment.

(1) Robert and John Hashe - brothers

Both were arrested and convicted in 1963 in Cape Town for belonging to the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). They were each sentenced to three years' imprisonment. They served the greater part of their sentences on Robben Island. Later they were transferred to Victor Verster Prison, Paarl. They were released in September 1966 at Lady Frere.

Whilst serving their sentences the authorities had questioned them about their original place of birth. John revealed that he was born in the Glen Grey area, but had left that area whilst still an infant and had never been there since. Robert was born and raised in Cape Town. Their father had died a bona-fide resident of Cape Town. Their mother was still in Cape Town. They were finally told that when they were released they would have to find a new home in the Glen Grey area.

On being released they immediately left for Cape Town on borrowed money, since they were not issued with railway warrants.2/ In Cape Town they soon got into trouble; Robert was arrested for failing to pay tax; John was ordered to leave the area at once. On arriving at Welcome Valley he was banned and restricted for two years. Robert is not banned and is still single. John, a tailor by profession, is married and has one child. At one time he had made an application for transfer to a better place where he could make use of his qualifications. This was turned down on the grounds that he was banned and confined to Welcome Valley. Robert is working on road construction and repairing for £8.5s. a month. His brother decided to make do with the meagre earnings he gets from his few and poor customers. His sick wife has to make occasional emergency trips to doctors in Queenstown. One

2/ With criminals the usual procedure is to issue them with rail warrants plus 10/- for provision and one blanket. Nothing of the sort is done when a political leaves prison.

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night his wife suddenly fell violently ill and he had to spend £2 on transport alone to a doctor in Queenstown.

(2). Sinyetha Simon, Mayedwa, Madaki and Siwisa

All of them come from Port Elizabeth. All except Madaki are married and have children. All served prison terms (three years) having been convicted on membership of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). All had been in Robben Island and Victor Verster Prisons. On being discharged they were all banned and confined to the area of Port Elizabeth for two years. Their banning have all been amended to facilitate deportation to Welcome Valley. They all had to leave Port Elizabeth on short notice. Mayedwa had to leave his expectant wife behind and take with him only the few things he would need until she joined him later. About two weeks after his departure she gave birth and had to consequently postpone her departure for Welcome Valley. In the meantime Mayedwa had to borrow pots and all before he could prepare a meal for himself. They have two children, and they feel it is tough to live on £8.5s., pay rent and give proper attention to the needs of a growing baby.

Siyetha's wife is still in Port Elizabeth with their children. She felt she could not leave her job and go and live on her husband's meagre wages. She cannot hope for employment anywhere in that area including Queenstown.

(3) Nomavirka, Sizile, Mahangu and Eric Vara

They are from Cradock. Were arrested and found guilty of being members of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1963. All but Vara served in Robben Island and Victor Verster Prisons. Vara served in Port Elizabeth and Groen Punt Prisons. They were all banned on being released. When they moved to Welcome Valley their two-year banning orders were accordingly amended.

Sizile is married and has two children. They came just before I left and in their shack they managed to put in a bed and a few other things and the shack was full. They had to store the rest of their furniture in a corrugated iron store 400 yds away. His expectant wife was violently ill and had to be taken to Queenstown. He, as a banned person, could not accompany her to Queenstown and had consequently to ask an old woman to accompany his wife.

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At the time of departure Nomavirka and Mahangu were still waiting for their property (beds, chairs, tables, etc) to arrive They were told by officials to leave them behind and were given assurances that their belongings would be mailed to them. A whole month passed and no goods came. Mahangu asked for permission and left for Cradock. He found them lying neatly packed upon the same spot they had left them. He was not allowed to take his, because, the authorities stated, his property was mixed up with Nomavirka's. Security Police ordered him to leave the area at once. I am hoping that at least by now they have got them, otherwise I cannot imagine how they are managing on cold damp mud floors at night.

Vara's is a special case that needs more attention. He is very sick, suffering from T.B. and asthma (that is, as far as we could make out). He is very weak and can do very little for himself; he is married and has two children - the third is on its way. What is worse is that he is progressively becoming mental. He cannot even recognize the people he served with in gaol for three years. He sits for hours without talking to anyone and without concentrating on anything in particular. At times he suffers from a loss of memory. Several times he has attempted suicide. When I first saw him at Welcome Valley he kept on asking where he was and why couldn't he die and get relief from, I quote, "this suffering of the body and mind". As far as I know he is not getting any proper medical attention. His expectant wife says she will have to leave him and go to Cradock when her time is due, since there are neither clinics nor health centres there. I cannot imagine how Eric can manage on his own.

I feel strongly that Vara's present mental condition is as a result of torture at the hands of the political police. People who were with him in Groen Punt Prison say when he was released he left in good health and spirits. However, he arrived at home in bad shape. He was in fact picked up by relatives lying unconscious in the street. What happened between the period he left Groen Punt under police escort and the time he was picked up in the street in Cradock I do not know. But I do know that the police wanted further information from him. Whether they got it and how I do not know. Vara himself is very reluctant to discuss this with anyone.

When I left some arrangements had been made to let (welfare organization) know about him and he was already receiving assistance from the organization.

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(4) Tshatshu, Nabe and Kwezi

All three are married and have children. All come from Port Elizabeth. Sixty-nine years old, Mr. Tshatshu is expected to work on road repairing like any other ex-political. He served his gaol term in Robben Island and Groen Punt Prisons. When he was being endorsed out of Port Elizabeth he was told not to worry about his movable property - it would follow by rail later at Government expense. When it reached him several weeks later there were missing articles including a mattress and a sideboard had been badly smashed. He reported this to the Superintendent who curtly referred him to the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner in Port Elizabeth. He wrote to the Commissioner claiming compensation, but as far as I know no reply came from that quarter.

Kwezi was transferred from Robben Island straight to Lady Frere a month before his date of discharge. He was released in February 1967 and told to go straight to Welcome Valley. Though not a banned person the magistrate would not allow him to proceed to his family in Port Elizabeth. His family and property, the magistrate explained, would be sent to him later. He had no money, no extra clothes but was expected to live for some time in Welcome Valley. The worse thing about Kwezi's case was the fact that the authorities literally flung him out of gaol and left him to fend for himself in a new environment with the implied warning that should he try to get to his family he would be promptly arrested. He had to share a bed with one of the clerks in the local administration office. His family and property arrived two weeks later.

Nabe is a qualified carpenter but works on road repairing for £8.5s a month.

(5) Alfred Dlamini, Andili Mali, Howard Cuntu

All three come from Uitenhage. They were arrested and convicted in 1964 (August) for membership of the African National Congress (ANC). The sentence was two and one half years on each. They served their sentences in Robben Island and Groen Punt Prisons.

Just before they were released on 24 November 1966 the Chief Magistrate visited us in prison and told us that we were all, according to the list he had, from the area of Glen Grey and that we would be offered jobs in that area. He did not mention Welcome Valley. Naturally this idea of a second place of birth came

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as a shock to the five of us, that is the three, Nhanhanha (from Port Elizabeth) and myself. We later raised the matter with the magistrate giving him full details of our place and dates of birth, adding that most had never been to that area before. He finally admitted he did not really know why we had been transferred to Lady Frere, since the sanest thing to do on the part of the Prisons Department would have been to take us to the Port Elizabeth gaol. Shortly afterwards the Security Police from Queenstown came for details about place and dates of births, nature of offences for which convicted, nature of work we did prior to arrest and whether our families would be prepared to take us back. We wanted to know from them whether perhaps the Government was going to detain us somewhere in that area; they said they did not know and allayed our suspicions by saying that as far as they were concerned they were convinced there had been a mistake - we should have been taken to Port Elizabeth.

Dlamini, Cuntu and Mali were released at about 11.30 a.m. on 24 November but by 3.30 p.m. the following day they were still in Lady Frere, stranded I should say. According to them they were fetched from prison by two security men in a car. The car stopped near a cafe and they were told they could go and buy whatever they needed. By the time they emerged from the cafe the car had vanished into thin air. With the assistance of some local people they got to a hostel where they could buy a meal. They later reported at the Police Station and asked for transport to Uitenhage, since they had not been issued with railway warrants. They possessed only R3 (£1.10s.) whilst a single journey third class ticket to Uitenhage costs R2.85 (£1.8s.6d.). The police officer advised them to see the chief magistrate.

On reporting there, the chief magistrate told them for the first time that their new home was to be Welcome Valley. He explained that:

(a) They had not been given rail warrants because the Government wanted them at Welcome Valley, not at Uitenhage.

(b) They would each be offered a one-roomed shack and rent would be R2.40 (£1.4s.) a month.

(c) They would be given a week's food ration to help them until they got assistance from parents.

(d) They would be offered work on road/dam construction and repairing at R16.50 per month.

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Their reply was that:

(a) They expected some humane treatment from the Government.

(b) They would like to see their families and discuss the new set up with them.

(c) They could not be expected to live on the scanty starchy food rations the Government was offering them.3/

(d) They were prepared to do any type of work but not at R16.50 a month. This amount would not even cover the bare necessities of life.

(e) They would like to further their studies by correspondence and with £8.5s. they would not be able to do this.

(f) Even if they could somehow get financial assistance for studies, Welcome Valley could hardly pretend to be a suitable place for this purpose, and they added that it would not be possible for them to have access to a library.

(g) Even during the first week with their food rations they would still have to buy things like blankets, paraffin burners, paraffin, sugar, coffee, soap and numerous other things they did not have.

On the question of blankets the magistrate promised that each would get two blankets, but there would be no mats to sleep on. But even in the harshest of prisons a prisoner is entitled to at least one mat to sleep on. To all of us, ex-politicals, the whole set-up seems to be a second extra-judiciary form of punishment.

Their spirits dampened by what the magistrate had told them, they decided to hitch-hike to Uitenhage. In this sort of a situation one feels that nothing has really changed; one is still in prison and perhaps in a more terrible prison where one has the constant nagging fear of whether one will be able to get the next meal.

However, with the assistance of some good Samaritan they managed to get to Kingwilliamstown, and from there a friend hired a taxi for them to Uitenhage. On arrival there they were issued with work-seekers' permits by the local authorities. Mali got a good paying job, but a few days later they were summoned to the Superintendent's office, who "duly" and "dutifully" explained that they had, by serving more than six months in jail, forfeited their residential rights in

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3/ Food ration consists of: Mealies (red), mealie meal, beans, condensed milk, fat and salt.

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Uitenhage. The security man who was present at this interview acidly remarked that their "only home was Welcome Valley". On 2 January 1967 Mali had to resign his job and together with Cuntu bid Uitenhage goodbye. Dlamini's period of stay in Uitenhage was extended by the Chief Bantu Commission because he had to sit for examinations at Rhodes University. He joined us later at Welcome Valley.

Fortunately for them all three chaps are not banned and still single; so far they have managed to resist forced cheap "native" labour.

(6) There are two other men I have almost forgotten, viz., Afred Qungani from Port Elizabeth, who is not banned, and Bless, who is banned. Both are married and have children.

(7) Mahlubi Livingstone Mrwetyana (the writer)

On being released at Lady Frere on 21 December 1966 I was ordered to report to the Chief Magistrate there. I was arrested on 4 September 1964 while waiting for the results of my application for a passport, for I had been offered a scholarship to study at the University College, London in August, 1964. I was later convicted on charges under the Red Act. I was originally sentenced to four years' imprisonment for membership and furthering the aims of the African National Congress (ANC). On Appeal, one count was dismissed and sentence was reduced to two years. The Chief Magistrate was, however, away, and consequently I had to see the assistant/additional magistrate.

The assistant magistrate produced a copy of a letter to the Chief Magistrate informing him about the impending banning order against me, and added that under the circumstances I could not leave the area of Glen Grey. In reply, I told him of my firm resolve to see my mother before I could even think of Welcome Valley. I made it clear to him that I was aware of the fact that people deemed "undesirable elements" were being removed from their original places, and I accepted this as Government principle against which I could do nothing at the time, but I expected a fair deal from the authorities, i.e. I should be allowed to see my family first. I also highlighted the fact that what he had said about a banning order was still rumour as far as I was concerned, because, I had not been actually served with any banning orders, and as far as I could interpret my legal position, I was still free to go to any part of the Republic. Under the circumstances,

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therefore, I would leave for Uitenhage. He finally admitted he could not stop me from leaving, since he had "nothing documentary enabling him to do so", to quote his very words. Fortunately I had some money and I left for Uitenhage.

When I reported at the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner's office in Port Elizabeth the Commissioner was furious, saying that I had no right to be in the area; I was, according to the letter he had, a banned person. I explained that no banning orders had as yet been served on me, and I would only regard myself a banned person when, and only when, this was done. After some consultations on the phone (presumably with Security Police officers in Port Elizabeth) he told me to report at the Uitenhage administration office; in the meantime he would send instructions to the manager of Uitenhage. Of those instructions I was to learn when I eventually saw the manager. He asked for my reference book and endorsed it.

The endorsement read as follows:

"To report to B.A.C. at Glen Grey before 31-12-66 for the purpose of Settlement. Date 28-12-66."

It was signed by a Municipal Labour Officer.

Some kind people assisted me with train fare and I left Uitenhage on 29 December 1966 for Welcome Valley. On arrival there two Security Police served me with the banning order restricting me to the Glen Grey area and requiring me to report at a police station - Bolotiva police station - about twenty miles away every first Saturday of the month. I had to borrow a bicycle and cycle the whole distance to and from Bolotiva, because there is virtually no transport to that place.

The four of us from Uitenhage refused to work for R16.50 a month. Cuntu, Mali and Dlanini applied to the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, and when they did not receive a reply they decided to let Mrs. Helen Suzman, M.P., know about it. They put their whole story to her in writing. While waiting for new developments we had to cut down our meals to two a day at 11.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. Later we got assistance from (a welfare organization). The fact that four of us had refused work coupled, I should think, with the letters to Mrs. Suzman, set the Government thinking. Just before I left, new developments were that people who were not banned could go to Mdantsane in East London, and those banned would have to make applications for transfer to Mdantsane to the Minister of Justice. Mdantsane was officially described to us as a place abounding with opportunities for work, but those who go expect anything.

UNIT ON APARTHEID
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND
SECURITY COUNCIL AFFAIRS

ST/PSCA/SER.A/5

THE SHARPEVILLE INCIDENT AND ITS INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Paper prepared by the Rt. Reverend Ambrose Reeves, former Bishop of Johannesburg, at the request of the Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa

UNITED NATIONS, New York, 1968

NOTE

The Unit on Apartheid was established in the Secretariat of the United Nations, in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 2144 A (XXI) of 26 October 1966, "to deal exclusively with policies of apartheid, in consultation with the Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa, in order that maximum publicity may be given to the evils of those policies". Among the functions of the Unit is the preparation of special studies on apartheid.

This paper on the Sharpeville incident and its international significance has been prepared at the request of the Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa by the Rt. Reverend Ambrose Reeves, who was Bishop of Johannesburg when the incident occurred on 21 March 1960. It is published in this series at the request of the Special Committee.

It may be recalled that, by resolution 2142 (XXI) of 26 October 1966, the General Assembly proclaimed 21 March as International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and that this date was chosen as it was the date of the Sharpeville incident.

The Special Committee felt that this account of the incident should be published in order to promote the commemoration of the International Day.

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History records that on 13 May 1902 the treaty which ended the Anglo-Boer war was signed at Vereeniging, then a small town some thirty miles from Johannesburg. Nobody could then have realized that some fifty-eight years later the whole world would learn of another event occurring in that part of the Transvaal; this time in the African township of Sharpeville. As with most towns on the Reef, as the white population of Vereeniging grew so did the townships for Africans on the outskirts of the town. It is somewhat ironical that the outrage that was perpetrated at Sharpeville should have occurred at a place which had already earned a high reputation for African housing. Eleven years earlier the authors of the Handbook of Race Relations in South Africa had noted that "recently Vereeniging instituted its own building department and is making speedy progress in the erection of houses at the new Sharpe Native Township in which it is designed to build 3,165 houses at a total cost of £1,219,216. Although the Smit Report recommended that work of a fairly straightforward type should be undertaken by the local authority, Natives working under the supervision of experienced European foremen, other local authorities have not acted on this recommendation to any considerable extent. They are probably not prepared to risk incurring the displeasure of European trade unions". (page 251)

Yet in spite of the fact that the white local authority in Vereeniging was one of the first municipalities in South Africa to provide better housing for Africans, it was the events at Sharpeville on 21 March 1960, which shocked the world and which are still remembered with shame by civilized men everywhere. Early that morning a crowd of Africans estimated at between 5,000 and 7,000 marched through Sharpeville to the municipal offices at the entrance to the township. It appears that much earlier that day members of the Pan Africanist Congress had gone around Sharpeville waking up people and urging them to take part in this demonstration. Other members of the PAC prevented the bus drivers going on duty with the result that there were no buses to take the people to work in Vereeniging. Many of them set out on bicycles or on foot to their places of work, but some were met by Pan Africanists who threatened to burn their passes or "lay hands on them" if they did not turn back. However, many Africans joined the procession to the municipal offices quite willingly. Eventually this demonstration was dispersed by the police, using tear gas bombs and then a baton charge, some sixty police following them into the side streets. Stones were flung and one policeman was slightly injured. It was alleged

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that several shots were fired by Africans and that only then some policemen opened fire without an order from their officer to do so. Fortunately nobody was hurt.

I was not at Sharpeville when the shooting occurred but it was familiar territory to me. Time and again I officiated at the large African Anglican church there and knew intimately many of the congregation, some of whom were to be involved in the events of that tragic day. I could so well visualize the scene. Near my home in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg was a large zoo situated in acres of parkland. By a curious anomaly the lake near the zoo was the meeting place for Africans working in the northern suburbs on a Sunday afternoon. Work finished for the day they would leisurely make their way there in small groups - a gay, colourful, jostling crowd - families and individuals - some political, some not, chatting, laughing, singing, gesticulating and occasionally fighting. The thud of homemade drums could be heard shattering the Sunday calm, and over all the plaintive notes of the penny whistle - shrill and penetrating. It could so easily have been like that on that crisp autumn morning in Sharpeville. Like that, but so very different.

During the morning news spread through the township that a statement concerning passes would be made by an important person at the Police Station later that day. The result was that many who had been concerned in the earlier demonstration drifted to the Police Station where they waited patiently for the expected announcement. And all the time the crowd grew. Reading from the police report on what subsequently happened the Prime Minister told the House of Assembly that evening that the police estimated that 20,000 people were in that crowd. This seems to have been a serious exaggeration. From photographs taken at the time it is doubtful if there were ever more than 5,000 present at any particular moment, though it may well be that more than this number were involved at one time or another as people were coming and going throughout the morning. They were drawn to the crowd by a variety of reasons. Some wanted to protest against the pass laws: some were present because they had been coerced; some were there out of idle curiosity; some had heard that a statement would be made about passes.

But whatever may have brought them to the Police Station, I was unable to discover that any policeman ever tried either to find out why they were there or make any request for them to disperse. And this in spite of the fact that the presence of this crowd seems to have caused a good deal of alarm to the police. So much so that at ten o'clock that morning a squadron of aircraft dived low over

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the crowd, presumably to intimidate them and encourage them to disperse. This was surely a most expensive way of trying to disperse a crowd. The police claimed that the people in the crowd were shouting and brandishing weapons and the Prime Minister told the Assembly that the crowd was in a riotous and aggressive mood and stoned the police. There is no evidence to support this. On the contrary, while the crowd was noisy and excitable, singing and occasionally shouting slogans it was not a hostile crowd. Their purpose was not to fight the police but to show by their presence their hostility to the pass system, expecting that someone would make a statement about passes. Photographs taken that morning show clearly that this was no crowd spoiling for a fight with the police. Not only was the crowd unarmed, but a large proportion of those present were women and children. All through the morning no attack on the police was attempted. Even as late as one p.m. the Superintendent in charge of the township was able to walk through the crowd, being greeted by them in a friendly manner and chatting with some of them. Similarly, the drivers of two of the Saracen tanks stated subsequently that they had no difficulty in driving their vehicles into the grounds surrounding the Police Station. And their testimony was borne out by photographs taken of their progress.

As the hours passed the increasing number of people in the crowd was matched by police reinforcements. Earlier there had only been twelve policemen in the Police Station: six white and six non-white. But during the morning a series of reinforcements arrived until by lunch time there was a force of nearly 300 armed and uniformed men in addition to five Saracens. Yet in spite of the increased force that was then available, no one asked the crowd to disperse and no action was taken to arrange for the defence of the Police Station. The police just strolled around the compound with rifles slung over their shoulders, smoking and chatting with one another.

So the scene was set. Anyone who has lived in the Republic of South Africa knows how explosive that situation had already become. On the one side the ever-growing crowd of noisy Africans - the despised Natives - the Kaffirs who, at all costs, must be kept down lest they step outside the place allotted to them. On the other side the South African police. Every African fears them, whether they be traffic police, ordinary constables or members of the dreaded Special Branch. Most policemen expect unquestioning deference from Africans. If this is not

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forthcoming they immediately interpret it as riot and rebellion. In part this is due to the widespread prejudice of white people the world over to those who happen to have a different coloured skin than their own. But in South Africa it is underpinned by the hatred, fear and contempt that so many white police have for all non-white people.

The only action taken during that morning appears to have come not from the police but from two Pan Africanist leaders who urged the crowd to stay away from the fence around the perimeter of the compound so that they did not damage it. Then Lieutenant Colonel Pienaar arrived in the compound. He appears to have accepted that he had come into a dangerous situation and therefore made no attempt either to use methods of persuasion on the crowd or to attempt to discover what the crowd was waiting for. Instead, about a quarter of an hour after his arrival he gave the order for his men to fall in. A little later he said, "Load five rounds". But he said no more to any of his officers, or to the men. Later, Colonel Pienaar stated that he thought his order would frighten the crowd and that his men would understand that if they had to fire they would not fire more than five rounds. Unfortunately, this was not understood by the policemen under his command.

During this time Colonel Spengler, then head of the Special Branch, was arresting two of the leaders of the Pan Africanist Congress. Afterwards he arrested a third man. Colonel Spengler said subsequently that he was able to carry out his arrests because while the crowd was noisy it was not in a violent mood.

It is extremely difficult to know what happened next. Some of the crowd near the gate of the Police Station compound said later that they heard a shot. Some said that they heard a policeman say, "Fire". Others suddenly became aware that the police were firing in their midst. But all agreed that practically all of them turned and ran away once they realized what was happening. A few, it is true, stood their ground for some seconds, unable to understand that the police were not firing blanks. Lieutenant Colonel Pienaar was quite clear that he did not give the order to fire. Moreover, he declared that he would not have fired in that situation. It was stated later that two white policemen opened fire and that about fifty others followed suit, using service revolvers, rifles and sten guns.

But whatever doubts there may be of the sequence of events in those fateful minutes, there can be no argument over the devastating consequences of the action

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of the police on 21 March 1960 in Sharpeville. Sixty-nine people were killed, including eight women and ten children, and that of the 180 people who were wounded thirty-one were women and nineteen were children. According to the evidence of medical practitioners it is clear that the police continued firing after the people began to flee for while thirty shots had entered the wounded or killed from the front of their bodies no less than 155 bullets had entered the bodies of the injured and killed from their backs. All this happened in forty seconds, during which time 705 rounds were fired from revolvers and sten guns. But whatever weapons were used the massacre was horrible. Visiting the wounded the next day in Baragwaneth Hospital near Johannesburg, I discovered youngsters, women and elderly men among the injured. These could not be described as agitators by any stretch of the imagination. For the most part they were ordinary citizens who had merely gone to the Sharpeville Police Station to see what was going on. Talking with the wounded I found that everyone was stunned and mystified by what had taken place. They had certainly not expected that anything like this would happen. All agreed that there was no provocation for such savage action by the police. Indeed, they insisted that the political organizers who had called for the demonstration had constantly insisted that there should be no violence or fighting.

To make matters worse, some of the wounded with whom I spoke in hospital stated that they were taunted by the police as they lay on the ground, being told to get up and be off. Others who tried to help were told to mind their own business. At first there was only one African minister of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa who tried to help the wounded and the dying. It is true that later the police assisted in tending the wounded and summoned ambulances which conveyed the injured to Vereeniging and Baragwaneth Hospitals. Later, still 77 Africans were arrested in connexion with the Sharpeville demonstration in some cases while they were still in hospital. In fact, it was clear on my visits to the wards of Baragwaneth Hospital that many of the injured feared what would happen to them when they left hospital. This wasn't surprising, for Baragwaneth Hospital was an extraordinary sight. Outside each of the wards to which the wounded were taken were a number of African police, some white policemen, and members of the Special Branch in civilian clothes. The attitude of the South African Government to the events at Sharpeville can be seen from its reaction to the civil claims lodged the following September by 224 persons for damages amounting to around £400,000 arising from the

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Sharpeville killings. The following month the Minister of Justice announced that during the next parliamentary session the Government would introduce legislation to indemnify itself and its officials retrospectively against claims resulting from action taken during the disturbances earlier that year. This was done in the Indemnity Act No. 61 of 1961. Not that money could ever compensate adequately for the loss of a breadwinner to a family or make up for lost limbs or permanent incapacity. But it would have been some assistance. It is true that in February 1961 the Government set up a committee to examine the claims for compensation and to recommend the payment of ex gratia payments in deserving cases. But this is not the same thing, and in fact by October 1962 no payments had been made.

Few commentators since Sharpeville have attempted to justify the action of the police that day. In fact, many of them have drawn special attention to the complete failure of the police to attempt to communicate with the crowd at the Police Station. If it had been a white crowd the police would have tried to find out why they were there and what they wanted. Surely their failure to do so was due to the fact that it never occurred to them as the custodians of public order either to negotiate with the African leaders or to try to persuade the crowd to disperse. Their attitude was summed up by the statement of Lieutenant Colonel Pienaar that "the Native mentality does not allow them to gather for a peaceful demonstration. For them to gather means violence". The same point was demonstrated even more graphically by one of his answers at the Court of Enquiry under Mr. Justice Vessels. When he was asked if he had learnt any useful lesson from the events in Sharpeville he replied, "Well, we may get better equipment".

Not that all members of the South African Police Force are cruel or callous. No doubt many of them were shocked by what happened. At the same time what happened at Sharpeville emphasizes how far the police in South Africa are cut off from sympathy with or even understanding of Africans. And this is underlined by the fact that at no time did the police express regret for this tragic happening. Yet it would be folly to attempt to fasten the whole blame for the events at Sharpeville on the police. By the mass of repressive legislation which has been enacted every year since 1948, the South African Government has given the police a task which ever becomes more difficult to fulfil.

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It was this legislation which was indirectly responsible for the tragedy of Sharpeville, and in particular the "pass laws". Indeed, the immediate cause of many in the crowd assembling at the Police Station was the growing resentment of Africans to the system of passes. This system originated in 1760 in the Cape Colony to regulate the movement of slaves between the urban and the rural areas. The slaves had to carry passes from their masters. Subsequently, the system was extended in various forms to the whole country and was eventually collated in the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945. This Act made provision for a variety of passes including registered service contracts and for passes permitting men to seek for work in particular areas. But through the years an increasing number of Africans had been given exemption from these laws. This was the situation which obtained until 1952 when a new act ironically called "The Abolition of Passes Act" made it compulsory for every African male, whether he had previously had to carry passes or no, to carry a reference book. If the holder had previously been exempted from the pass laws he was now privileged to carry a reference book with a green instead of a brown cover! But the contents were identical. The advent of the reference books meant that technically there were no longer any such things as passes. But, as will be understood, to the Africans reference books are passes for they contain all the details which were previously entered on the various pass documents. They contain the holder's name, his tax receipt, his permit to be in an urban area and to seek work there, permits from the Labour Bureau, the signature each month of his employer to show that he is still in the employment he was given permission to take, as well as other particulars. Even more objectionable than having to possess a reference book is the fact that this book must be produced on demand to any policeman or any of the fifteen different classes of officials who may require to see it. Failure to produce it on demand constitutes an offence for which an African may be detained up to thirty days while inquiries are being made about him. What this means in practice can be seen from the fact that in the twelve months ending 30 June 1966 no less than 479,114 Africans were prosecuted for offences against the "pass laws". At the time of Sharpeville there were 1,000 prosecutions a day for these offences. By 1966, this had risen to over 1,300 a day. These figures speak for themselves.

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In 1960 a new development occurred when the Government of South Africa decided for the first time in South African history to extend the pass laws to African women. In their case another fear was added that they might be subjected to manhandling by the police with a further loss of human dignity. In fact, by the time of Sharpeville it was estimated that three quarters of African women were in possession of reference books. But many of the women who had not obtained reference books were strenuously opposed both to the pass system and to its extension to themselves. To them reference books stood for racial identification, and therefore for racial discrimination.

But this was by no means the only reason for unrest in Sharpeville. Anyone who knew the township at that time was aware that there had been increasing tension among the inhabitants because in that area wages were too low and rents were too high. Prior to March of that year rents had been increased in Sharpeville and this had added to the burdens of Africans living there. The previous year (1959) a study of the economic position of Africans in Johannesburg had shown that 80 per cent of Africans were living at or below the poverty datum line. The probability is that the lot of Africans in Sharpeville was worse than in Johannesburg. A survey carried out by the Johannesburg Non-European Affairs Department in 1962 in Soweto showed that 68 per cent of families there had an income below the estimated living costs. A subsequent study in 1966 showed that this figure remained the same. So in spite of the increaed prosperity of South Africa the economic position of a high percentage of Africans does not seem to have improved much since Sharpeville.

African wages in Sharpeville in 1960 were low, partly because African Trade Unions were not (and still are not) recognized for the purpose of bargaining with employers. But also, the continuing colour bar in commerce and industry meant, and still means, high minimum wages for white workers and low maximum wages for the black workers who make up the great majority of the labour force. All this means two wage structures in South Africa which have no relation to one another: in the fixing of the black wage structure the workers frequently have no say at all.

Several months before the tragic events at Sharpeville it was becoming obvious that those living in the township were facing an intolerable economic

situation. It is too easy to dismiss the Sharpeville demonstration at the Police Station as the work of agitators and the result of intimidation. All that those who led the demonstration did was to use a situation which, for political and economic reasons, was already highly explosive.

Not that Sharpeville was an isolated incident. The ten years before Sharpeville had seen feverish activity by the opponents of apartheid. By means of boycotts, mass demonstrations, strikes and protests, the non-white majority had attempted by non-violent means to compel those in power to modify their racist policies. For example, on 26 June 1952, the Campaign of Resistance to Unjust Laws had been launched. The same day three years later (26 June 1955) 3,000 delegates had adopted the Freedom Charter which had been drafted by the Congress Alliance. This took place at a massive gathering at Kliptown, Johannesburg. The following year (1956) the Federation of South African Women held a series of spectacular demonstrations against the extension of the pass system to African women. These culminated in a mass demonstration at the Union Buildings, Pretoria, on 9 August. Some 10,000 women gathered there in an orderly fashion to present 7,000 individually signed protest forms. Again, from 7 January 1957, many thousand African men and women for months walked eighteen to twenty miles a day to and from work in Johannesburg in a boycott of the buses. Although in this particular case they gained their objective, all the various endeavours by Africans to secure change by peaceful means brought little tangible result.

The surprising thing was that in all this activity there was very little violence on the part of boycotters, demonstrators and strikers. In spite of great and frequent provocation by the police, Africans remained orderly and disciplined. They were in truth non-violent. As could be expected there were, however, occasions when the resentment and frustration of Africans spilled over into violence. One such occasion was at Cato Manor near Durban, on 17 June 1959. On that day a demonstration of African women at the beer hall destroyed beer and drinking utensils and was dispersed by the police. Several days later the Director of the Bantu Administration Department met 2,000 women at the beer hall. Once they had stated their grievances they were ordered to disperse. When they failed to do so the police made a baton charge. General disorder and rioting followed, with the result that damage estimated at £100,000 was done to vehicles

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and buildings. Later that day Africans attacked a police picket and were driven off with sten guns. After this, things remained comparatively quiet in Cato Manor until a Sunday afternoon in February, 1960, when the smouldering resentment of Africans there again burst into flame. An ugly situation developed in which nine policemen lost their lives. This was a deplorable business. Whatever may be said of the actions of the South African police these men died while carrying out their duties. The blame for their deaths must in the first instance lie on those who murdered them.

The fact that these deaths occurred in Cato Manor only a few weeks before the demonstration at Sharpeville must have been well known to the police gathered at the Police Station in Sharpeville that morning. Certainly more than one spokesman of the South African Government linked these two affairs together. There is not the slightest evidence, however, that there was in this sense any connexion between the tragedies of Cato Manor and Sharpeville. But in another sense they were both intimately connected because more indirectly they both arose out of the action of those in power during the previous decade, who had taken every possible step to ensure that the whole life of the millions of Africans was encased within the strait-jacket of compulsory segregation.

Yet there the similarity ended. The crowd at Sharpeville was not attacking anything or anyone. Further, there is abundant evidence to show that they were unarmed. While nothing can justify the killing of police at Cato Manor, that incident cannot in any way exonerate the vicious action of the police at Sharpeville. As the late Sir Winston Churchill pointed out in a debate in the British House of Commons on 8 July 1920, "There is surely one general prohibition which we can make. I mean the prohibition against what is called 'frightfulness'. What I mean by frightfulness is the inflicting of great slaughter or massacre upon a particular crowd of people with the intention of terrorizing not merely the rest of the crowd, but the whole district or the whole country". This is precisely what the police did at Sharpeville. On that occasion Sir Winston concluded his speech with some words of Macaulay - "... and then was seen what we believe to be the most frightful of spectacles, the strength of civilization without mercy". These are words which aptly summarize all that happened at Sharpeville that March morning.

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Many people inside South Africa, though shocked for a time by the events at Sharpeville, ended by dismissing them as just one incident in the long and growing succession of disturbances that down the years have marked the implementation of apartheid. Certainly the Government of South Africa, though badly shaken in the days immediately following Sharpeville, soon regained control of the situation. On 24 March, the Government banned all public meetings in twenty-four magisterial districts. On 18 April, the Governor-General signed a proclamation (119) banning the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress as unlawful organizations, the result being that they were both driven underground. But neither of them became dormant. At the same time the Government mobilized the entire Citizen Force, the Permanent Force Reserve, the Citizen Force Reserve and the Reserve of Officers, and the whole of the Commando Force was placed on stand-by. Already on 30 March, in Proclamation No. 90, the Governor-General had declared a state of emergency which lasted until 31 August 1960. During that time a large number of prominent opponents of government policy of all races were arrested and detained without being brought to trial. In addition some 20,000 Africans were rounded up, many of whom were released after screening. So after some months eventually, at least superficially, life in South Africa became at least relatively normal. But underneath the external calm dangerous fires continue to smoulder: fires that can never be extinguished by repressive measures coupled with a constant and growing show offorce. Outside South Africa there were widespready reactions to Sharpeville in many countries which in many cases led to positive action against South Africa: action which still continues. But here, too, most people, even if they have heard of Sharpeville, have relegated what happened there to the archives of history, just one of the too many dark pages in the human story.

Yet it is my personal belief that history will recognize that Sharpeville marked a watershed in South African affairs. Until Sharpeville, violence for the most part had been used in South Africa by those who were committed to the maintenance of the economic and political domination of the white minority in the Republic. Down the years they had always been ready to use force to maintain the status quo whenever they judged it necessary to do so. When the occasion arose they did not hesitate to use it. Over and over again, non-white civilians were injured by police action or by assaults on them when in prison.

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Until Sharpeville the movements opposed to apartheid were pledged to a policy of non-violence. But on 21 March 1960, when an unarmed African crowd was confronted by 300 heavily armed police supported by five Saracen armoured vehicles, an agonizing reappraisal of the situation was inevitable. Small wonder is it that, having tried every peaceful method open to them to secure change without avail, the African leadership decided that violence was the only alternative left to them. Never again would they expose their people to another Sharpeville. As Nelson Mandela said in court at his trial in October, 1962, "Government violence can do only one thing and that is to breed counter-violence. We have warned repeatedly that the Government, by resorting continually to violence will breed in this country counter-violence among the people till ultimately, if there is no dawning of sanity on the part of the Government, the dispute between the Government and my people will finish up by being settled in violence and by force".

Outwardly things may go on in South Africa much as before. Visitors may find a booming economy, the white minority may seem secure in their privileged position for any foreseeable future, some urban Africans may have a higher living standard than formerly. But all this ought not to deceive anybody. The fact is that for the first time both sides in the racial struggle in South Africa are now committed to violence; the white minority to preserve the status quo; the non-white majority to change: change from a society dominated by apartheid to one that is non-racial in character. Already there are clear indications that the opponents of apartheid are turning deliberatly to violence. The fact that at the moment this is being expressed through small bands of guerrillas who may be neither very well trained nor well-equipped does not mean that they ought therefore to be dismissed as having little significance. After all, we have the examples of Algeria, Cuba and Viet-Nam before us as powerful reminders of what may result from very small and weak beginnings. In spite of the present calm in South Africa and a prosperity unparalleled in its history, within the Republic the seeds of violence have already been sown. Unless there is a radical change in the present political and economic structures of South Africa that which has already been sown will be harvested in a terrible and brutal civil war which might easily involve the whole African continent in conflict before it ends.

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Indeed it may be that in the present situation in the Republic of South Africa are hidden forces which will involve humanity in a global racial conflict unless the present racist policies there are changed radically. The choice before the international community has been a clear one ever since Sharpeville. Either it takes every possible step to secure the abandonment of the present policies in South Africa or the coming years will bring increasing sorrow and strife both for South Africa and for the world. Sharpeville was a tragedy showing most plainly that the ideology of apartheid is a way of death and not of life. Can the nations recognize this before it is too late?

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